

THESIS,  
FICTION OF OUR TIMES,

FOR THE DEGREE OF



IN THE SCHOOL OF MODERN LANGUAGES.

BY

Raymond M. Place,

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LITERATURE IS SUBJECT TO FASHIONS AND EPIDEMICS. LIKE ALL OTHER THINGS WHICH DEPEND UPON THE JUDGEMENT AND TASTE OF THE HUMAN MIND, IT HAS ITS FAVORED STYLES AND CHARACTERISTICS SUCH AS THE TIMES MAY DICTATE. OURS IS PARTICULARLY AN AGE OF FICTION. AS THE AGE OF PERICLES MARKS THE TIME WHEN GRECIAN LITERATURE WAS AT ITS ACME; AS THE AUGUSTAN AGE TELLS US OF EMINENT ROMAN WRITERS; AS THE ELIZABETHAN AGE WITNESSED THE GREAT SUPERIORITY OF THE ENGLISH DRAMA; SO OURS IS AN AGE OF NOVELISTS. ALL FICTION MAY BE PROPERLY DIVIDED INTO TWO CLASSES--REALISTIC AND ROMANTIC. IN EITHER CLASS THE PRIMARY OBJECT IS TO ENTERTAIN. THIS ENTERTAINMENT MAY COME THROUGH THE PRESENTATION OF MANNERS AND CHARACTER, OR DESCRIPTION OF ADVENTURE; IT MAY INCITE ENABLING MOTIVES, OR HAVE DEMORALIZING EFFECTS; BUT COME IT MUST IN ALL SUCCESSFUL WORKS OF FICTION.

TO CONSIDER THE FICTION OF OUR TIMES WITH REFERENCE TO ITS CHARACTERISTICS AND EFFECTS, AND TO COMPARE IT WITH CLASSIC FICTION IS THE OBJECT OF THIS PAPER. THAT NOW VARIABLE FACTOR OF LITERATURE, TO WHICH WE APPLY THE COMMON TERM NOVEL, OWES ITS ORIGIN TO GREEK WRITERS WHO LIVED DURING THE EARLY CENTURIES OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA. THOUGH THERE MAY EXIST STORIES AND SCRAPS OF FICTITIOUS WRITINGS WHICH CLAIM PERSIAN AUTHORSHIP; AND THOUGH THERE ARE PROBABLY OTHER EVIDENCES OF MAN'S DESIRE FOR THE FICTITIOUS EXISTING PRIOR TO THE GREEK COMPOSERS; YET WE MAY PROPERLY CALL THEAGENES THE FATHER OF FICTION. AS ITS BIRTH TOOK PLACE ON THE EVE OF

THAT CONTINUED PERIOD OF GLOOM AND ILLITERACY--THE MIDDLE AGES, IT WAS MANY CENTURIES BEFORE IT EMERGED FROM ITS SECLUDED POSITION AMONG THE DEPARTMENTS OF LITERATURE, AND CALLED THE WORLD TO ACKNOWLEDGE ITS RANK AND IMPORTANCE. DEFOE IN HIS STORY OF ADVENTURE, ROBINSON CRUSOE AND SWIFT IN HIS SATIRE, GULLIVERS TRAVELS, ARE THE FIRST TO BEGIN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WORTH OF ENGLISH FICTION, BUT TO RICHARDSON, AND TO FIELDING WHOM BYRON CALLED; 'THE PROSE HOMER OF HUMAN NATURE,' IT WAS LEFT TO REALLY INAUGERATE THE ENGLISH NOVEL. <sup>u</sup> THUS IT IS SEEN THAT FICTION GREW ABREAST WITH OTHER LITERATURE AFTER THE RENAISSANCE.

IN CONSIDERATION OF THE COMPARATIVE YOUTH OF FICTION, WE CAN BUT BE SURPRISED AT THE PROFUSENESS OF ITS GROWTH. STARTING A STREAM OF RELATIVE INSIGNIFICANCE A FEW CENTURIES AGO, IT HAS DEVELOPED INTO A RIVER WHICH FAR EXCELS IN EXTENT ANY OF THOSE WHICH HAVE RISEN WITH IT. OVERLOPING THE BOUNDS WHICH PROPERLY LIMIT THE NOVEL, FICTION HAS BEEN THROWN INTO ALL FORMS TO SUIT THE READER OF THE AGE. ARTHUR HELPS AND OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES OFFER THEIR ESSAYS IN NOVEL FORM, AND EVEN THE SCRIPTURAL TEACHING OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL DONS THE GARB OF FICTION TO ENTICE THE YOUTHFUL EYE. BETWEEN THE EXTRAVAGANT IMAGERY OF 'BUFFALO BILL' AND THE STUDIED REALISM OF 'UNCLE TOM'S CABIN,' WE FIND ALL DEGREES ALL GRADES. FICTION CONSTITUTES ABOUT ONE HALF OF THE CURRENT LITERATURE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, AND THE ANNUAL PRODUCTION OF WORKS OF FICTION AND SO-CALLED NOVELS EQUALS THAT OF THE WORKS ON ALL OTHER SUB-



JECTS, EXCLUSIVE OF TEXT-BOOKS AND BIBLES. AMONG THE NUMEROUS FICTION WRITERS MAY WE NOT SOON EXPECT TO FIND OUR SHAKESPEARES AND FLETCHERS OF THE NOVEL?

THIS TIDE OF FICTION WHICH IS NOW COMING TO ITS HEIGHT WITH US, BEGAN ITS SWELL ERE THE DAWNING OF THE PRESENT CENTURY. WALTER SCOTT AWOKE A NEW LIFE IN THE NOVEL BY INTRODUCING HISTORICAL CHARACTERS, ILLUSTRATIVE OF ENGLISH HISTORY, IN HIS HANDS WITH A STYLE ALWAYS AND FULL OF GRACE, THE NOVEL SERVED THE PURPOSE WHICH THE DRAMA HAD ANSWERED A CENTURY BEFORE. CONTEMPORANEOUS WITH SCOTT WAS J. FENIMORE COOPER, KNOWN AS THE NOVELIST OF THE INDIAN, WHO ESTABLISHED A TYPE OF NOVEL OF ADVENTURE WHICH WILL EVER BE DELIGHTFUL AND ENTERTAINING TO YOUTHFUL READERS. FOLLOWING CLOSELY THESE TWO ORIGINATORS, COME THE HOST OF EMINENT NOVELISTS WHO HAVE GIVEN THIS CENTURY ITS CHARACTERIZATION AS A CENTURY OF NOVEL WRITERS. DICKENS, THACKERY AND CHARLES READE REPRESENT THE ETHICAL STAGE --A CLASS TO WHICH THE SENTIMENTAL AND MORAL PURPOSE IS ALWAYS PARAMOUNT. GEORGE ELIOT STANDS OUT AS A PROMINENT FIGURE IN THE SCHOOL OF REALISTS. HER EXCELLENCE CONSISTS IN THE DUAL CAPABILITY OF CONFINING THE PORTRAITURE OF THE EXTERNAL WITH A THOROUGH UNDERSTANDING OF THE INTERNAL. LORD LYTTON IS THE MOST WORTHY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PICTORIAL NOVEL, WHICH IS MARKEDLY CHARACTERIZED AS HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE. HIS WORKS ARE BOTH ENTERTAINING AND INSTRUCTIVE, BUT DO NOT ESSENTIALLY CONCERN THE LIFE OF THE WORLD--A POWER IN HIS TIME, BUT NOT DESTINED TO BE

LONG ADMIRER BY THE POPULAR READER. HAWTHORNE UNDOUBTEDLY EXCELS IN THE IDEAL AND ROMANTIC TYPE OF FICTION. HIS WORKS IN CONCEPTION AND EXECUTION ARE ROMANTIC, BUT HIS PRESENTATIONS ARE GRAND AND HIS POWER AS A LITERARY ARTIST UNQUESTIONABLE. HE DEALS WITH THE SUPER-NATURAL, BUILDING IN THE MISTS OF IDEALISM, BUT HIS SYMPATHETIC TENDERNESS AND POLISHED MANNER OF TREATMENT WILL EVER PROVE ATTRACTIVE TO THOSE WHO SEEK A MASTER IN ROMANCE. THE ABOVE MENTIONED ARE BUT A FEW OF THOSE WHO HAVE LOANED THEIR ENERGIES TO MAKE THE FICTION OF OUR CENTURY SO CONSPICUOUS. WITH THEM HAVE LIVED NUMEROUS OTHERS, MANY OF WHOM ARE PERHAPS EQUALLY WORTHY OF MENTION, BUT THESE WILL SERVE AS EXAMPLES OF THE MOST EMINENT IN THE DIFFERENT CASTS OF FICTION.

THE GREAT SECRET OF THE SUCCESS OF THESE WRITERS IS THAT THEY HAVE WOVEN PLOTS WHICH CONCERN HUMANITY, AS WELL AS INTEREST THE READER. ENTERTAINMENT IS, OF COURSE, THE PRIME REQUISITE IN THE NOVEL, BUT WHEN THIS ENTERTAINMENT COMES IN SUCH A MANNER AS TO GIVE THE READER INFORMATION IN HISTORY, OR TO QUICKEN HIS SENSE OF DECENCY AGAINST SOME GROWING EVIL, OR POINTS OUT A POLITICAL DANGER AND ENABLES HIM TO THOROUGHLY UNDERSTAND IT, IT SERVES A DOUBLE PURPOSE. IN FACT A PRESENTATION IN FICTION WILL FREQUENTLY BE READ, AND OF NECESSITY CONSIDERED, WHEN ALL THE WEIGHT OF LOGIC AND FINISH OF RHETORIC FAIL IN ARGUMENTS. "FOR TRUTH, IN CLOSEST WORDS SHALL FALL, WHEN TRUTH EMBODIED IN THE TALE SHALL ENTER IN AT DOORS." ALL FICTITIOUS WRITING MUST BE SO CONSTRUCTED AS TO BE PERCEIVED BY IN-



TUITION, BUT WHEN THE ART OF AUTHORSHIP HAS SUCCEEDED IN MAKING IT POSSIBLE FOR THE ILLATIVE POWERS TO ACCOMPLISH WHAT GENERALLY HAS TO COME THROUGH THE REASON; IT HAS SUCCEEDED IN COMBINING THE NECESSARY WITH THE DESIRABLE, THE ATTRACTIVE WITH THE UNATTRACTIVE.

THE MOST NOTABLE EXAMPLE OF THE POWER AND INFLUENCE OF THE NOVEL THAT WE HAVE IS "UNCLE TOM'S CABIN," WRITTEN BY MRS. STOWE. THE POPULAR ACCEPTANCE OF THIS WORK BROUGHT THE INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY IN ITS TRUE LIGHT BEFORE THE PUBLIC BETTER AND MORE QUICKLY THAN VOLUMES OF ARGUMENTATIVE PROTESTS COULD HAVE DONE IN TWICE THE TIME. AND THIS WORK MAY BE COUNTED AS ONE OF THE MOST TELLING OF THE POLITICAL INFLUENCES OF ITS TIME.

MAN IS GREATER THAN HIS SURROUNDINGS. HIS ENVIRONMENT IS UNSATISFACTORY TO HIM, AND HE SEEKS FOR A SOMETHING EXTRANEIOUS TO HIMSELF FOR REST AND RECREATION, WHICH IS NOT TO BE OBTAINED FROM THE COMMON AND MATTER OF FACT MATERIAL OF ORDINARY LIFE. THE SATISFACTION OF THIS DESIRE HE FINDS IN THE NOVEL. AND HENCE WE FIND THAT MANY OF THE MOST CELEBRATED STATESMEN AND THINKERS OF THEIR TIMES WERE EXTENSIVE READERS OF FICTION. BURKE, WEBSTER, AND GUIZOT WERE ALL NOTED NOVEL READERS. THEY WERE ALL MEN WHO MADE GREAT INTELLECTUAL ACHIEVEMENTS; ALL MEN WHO DEALT WITH QUESTIONS WHICH REQUIRE AS DEEP THINKING AND PERSISTENT STUDY AS ANY WHICH EVER CONFRONT MAN; BUT FOR RECREATION IN LEISURE HOURS, AND REINVIGORATION AFTER URKSOME PERIODS OF MENTAL LABOR, THEY SOUGHT FICTION.

ONE OF THE PLAINEST TESTS OF THE POWER OF FICTION TO ENTRANCE AND PACIFY IS FOUND IN THE TALE OF THE "ARABIAN NIGHTS," WHERE THE BLOOD-THIRSTY BLUE BEARD IS DEBARRED FROM UXORCIDE BY THE FACINATING TALE, WHICH HIS WIFE SO ARTFULLY RELATES. THE READER CANNOT OBJECT TO GOING WITH SCOTT OVER HISTORICAL GROUND, NOR TO ENJOYING THE WARMTH OF CHRISTMAS FIRES WITH DICKENS. HE MAY GLOW IN CONTEMPT WITH THACKERY, OR ENLIST HIMSELF IN A CRUSADE AGAINST SOME WRONG WITH MRS. STOWE, OR CHARLES READE, BUT IN SO DOING HE MUST INTUITIVELY PASS ON AMID SCENES OF INTEREST AND ATTRACTION. HE WILL NOT DWELL LONG ON THE PLAIN AND PHILOSOPHICAL, IF THE ESSENCE OF THE FICTITIOUS NATURE BE WANTING.

EXCEPTING THE NEWS-PAPER, THE NOVEL IS THAT FORM OF LITERATURE WHICH HAS THE GREATEST EXTENT OF POPULAR INFLUENCE, AND IS THE MOST CHARACTERISTIC OF THE TIMES. IN THE PALACE AND THE COTTAGE ALIKE DWELL THE READERS OF FICTION. THE EDUCATED GO TO THE NOVEL FOR A CHANGE FROM MORE MIGHTY MATTER; AND THE UNEDUCATED READ NOVELS BECAUSE THEY ARE EASY OF COMPREHENSION, AND MORE READILY SOLICIT ATTENTION. FICTION GOES, TO SOME EXTENT, TO A DIFFERENT CLASS OF INDIVIDUALS THAN THOSE AMONG WHOM THE NEWS-PAPERS CIRCULATE MOST FREELY, AND MAY BE SAID TO BE THE COMPLEMENT OF THE NEWS-PAPER, SATISFYING THE GENERAL DEMAND OF THE PUBLIC FOR READING MATERIAL, NOT MET BY THE NEWS-PAPER. THE DISTINCTION IS NOT ABSOLUTE, BUT IN SOME DEGREE, ITS CONSISTENCY AND VERACITY ARE UNQUESTIONABLE. AS FICTION HAS SO WIDE-SPREAD A CIRCULATION AND IS SO FAR A SUBJECT OF ATTEN-



TION WITH THE GENERAL READER, A STUDY OF ITS CHARACTER AND INFLUENCE MUST NEEDS GIVE US A GREAT INSIGHT INTO THE TASTES OF THE TIMES.

NOVEL WRITING WITH MOST OF THE WRITERS WHO HAVE COME UP DURING THE LAST FEW YEARS SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN ADOPTED AS A PROFESSION RATHER THAN A MEANS OF ACCOMPLISHING ANY DEFINITE PURPOSE. THE QUESTION OF RENUMERATION TAKES PRECEDENCE OF THAT OF WORTH. QUANTITY, NOT QUALITY, HAS COME TO BE THE STANDARD BY WHICH THE AUTHOR MEASURES HIS SUCCESS. IN FORMER TIMES EMINENT WRITERS, IN OTHER DEPARTMENTS AS WELL AS IN FICTION, WROTE MOSTLY IN TIME NOT OCCUPIED BY THEIR REGULAR BUSINESS PURSUITS, --WROTE FOR AN END THEY WERE TO SECURE IN WRITING; AND NOT FOR PECUNIARY RETURNS. BUT IN OUR TIME THE CHANGE SEEMS TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE. WHAT IS THE RESULT? MANY WHO FIND THEMSELVES UNABLE TO SECURE A LIVELIHOOD IN ANY OTHER WAY, TURN THEIR ATTENTION TO FICTION WRITING. PLOT WEAVERS BECOME AS COMMON AS THOSE WHO FABRICATE MATERIAL WEBS. DETERIORATION IN QUALITY CONTINUES, BUT THE AMOUNT UNCEASINGLY INCREASES. THE STREAM LOSES ITS SINGLENESSE, BUT BROADENS INDEFINATELY. PELLUCIDITY AND DISTINCTNESS OF FLOW GIVE WAY TO WIDTH WITH SLUGGISH CURRENTS AND EXPANSIAL<sup>ne</sup> STAGNATION. IN MANNER OF TREATMENT AND THE HURRIED SEARCH FOR SUBJECTS MANY OF THE PRIMARY QUALITIES OF THE NOVEL ARE OVERLOOKED. THE SYNTHETIC CHARACTER IS SUPERCEDED BY THE ANALYTICAL, THE WRITER ANALYZES BUT DOES NOT CREATE.

THE TWO PRINCIPAL SCHOOLS WHICH HAVE SUCCEEDED TO THIS CHARACTER ARE THE FRENCH AND AMERICAN. THE FORMER PROFESS THE NAME OF REAL-



ISTS AND CLAIM TO BE THE IMITATORS OF BALZAC. THEIR OBJECT IS TO REPRESENT HUMANITY AS IT IS, BUT, FOR THE MOST PART, AS IT IS SEEN FROM THE MOST UNFAVORABLE SIDE. WITH LALA WE MUST GO WITH THE DEBASED SUBJECT OF SIN THROUGH ALL THE VICISSITUDES OF HIS CAREER, WHILE OUIDA WOULD HAVE US LOOK FOR PLANNED DECEIT, AND DEEP ROOTED HYPOCRISY BENEATH EVERY DEGREE OF FINISHED REFINEMENT AND POLISHED CULTURE. ARE THESE THEN THE SUCCESSORS OF BALZAC? REALISM IN SUCH FORMS CAN BUT EXCITE THE DEPRAVED AND DISGUST THE VIRTUOUS. THE AMERICAN SCHOOL HAS RECEIVED THE NAME WHICH IT BEARS, BECAUSE THOSE WHO GAVE THE INITIAL IMPETUS TO THIS STYLE OF FICTION CHANCED TO LIVE ON THIS SIDE OF THE ATLANTIC. THEY ARE MICROSCOPIC IN THEIR TREATMENT. THEY SEEK TO DISSECT AND ANALYZE, RATHER THAN TO COLLECT AND CREATE. ENTANGLEMENT OF PLOT AND VARIETY OF INCIDENT BECOME THE PREVAILING GUIDES, WHILE CONSISTENCY OF ACTION AND DEFINITENESS OF END FAIL. WHAT FOLLOWS? WE FIND THE STANDARD WRITERS WHO HAVE MADE NAMES IN THE REALM OF FICTION SUDDENLY SUPERCEDED BY SUCH AUTHORS AS MISS. BRADDON, MRS. HENRY WOOD, RIDER HAGGARD AND E. P. ROE, -- AUTHORS WHO EXTEND TALES INTO INDEFINITE NOTHINGNESS IN ORDER TO INSURE BULK; AUTHORS WHOSE SYMPATHIES MAY BE TENDER, AND WHOSE OBSERVATIONS MAY BE ACUTE; BUT WHO EITHER SOAR BEYOND THEIR POWER OF CONTROL, OR DEAL WITH THAT WHICH IN THEIR EXPERIENCE, IS UNFAMILIAR. FOR INSTANCE; ONE OF THE ABOVE MENTIONED WRITERS CARRIES A FAST CITY BOY THROUGH A DAY OF RAMBLES AND DISSIPATION AND THEN, WHILE HIS BRAIN IS IN A STATE OF EXCITEMENT AND

STILL STIMULATED BY INTOXICANTS, HE ALLOWS HIS MORE PIOUS COUNTRY COUSIN TO CONVERT HIM--A SCENE WHICH ACQUAINTANCE WITH REAL CHARACTER RENDERS SO RIDICULOUS AS TO MAKE OUR FAITH CHARY IN PARTS WHICH SEEM MORE REASON-ABLE.

ONE OF THE BEST EXAMPLES OF THE TRANSITION FROM THE REAL AND WORTHY TO THE RECENT TYPE OF FICTION IS FOUND IN "CALLED BACK." THE AUTHOR OF THIS WORK, HUGH CONWAY, WHOSE REAL NAME IS FARGUS, WAS A STOCK BROKER UNTIL LATE IN LIFE, WHEN IT BECAME SERIOUSLY EVIDENT TO HIM THAT HE WAS GIFTED AS A WRITER OF FICTION. HE GAVE UP HIS BUSINESS AND DEVOTED HIMSELF TO HIS NEW PROFESSION. AND HE IS BUT ONE OF THE MANY WHO HAVE TURNED THEIR ATTENTION TO THIS CALLING WITHOUT ANY PARTICULAR DESIGN OR PREVIOUS PREPARATION. "CALLED BACK" IS A WORK WHICH HAS HAD MANY READERS BUT IT HAS VERY LITTLE IF ANY LITERARY MERIT. THUS WE SEE THAT IN GENERAL THE CHARACTER AND MOTIVES OF THE FICTION AUTHORS AT PRESENT, AS WELL AS THE PRODUCTS OF THEIR LABOR, ARE VERY MUCH DIFFERENT FROM THOSE WHO HAVE GIVEN MODERN FICTION ITS MASTER PIECES AND ITS LAUDABLE CHARACTERISTICS. WHERE IS THE WORK OF ONE OF THESE WRITERS WHICH WOULD CALM A VERITABLE BLUE BEARD ? WHERE AMONG THEIR WORKS CAN WE FIND EVEN AN APPROXIMATE COUNTERPART OF "UNCLE TOM'S CABIN, OR THE UNDOUBTED REALISM AND CONSISTENCY OF "DAVID COPPERFIELD," SAYING NOTHING OF "IVANHOE" AND "THE LAST OF THE BARONS." TO WHICH ONE COULD WE REFER A GUIZOT OR A BURKE?



THE MOST CURIOUS THING ABOUT THIS CLASS OF WRITERS IS THE POPULAR ACCEPTANCE WITH WHICH THEY MEET. DETECTIVE STORIES SEEM NEVER TO WEARY AND EDITIONS IN PAMPHLET FORM WITH SOME SUGGESTIVE TITLE STAMPED ON THE COVER, MEET WITH AS READY SALE AS TICKETS AT A CIRCUS WAGON. AS THE WISEST MEN ARE SOMETIMES GIVEN TO THE MOST TRIVIAL FOLLIES, SO WE AS A GENERATION, THE MOST ENLIGHTENED AND EDUCATED IN THE GENERAL LINES OF SCIENCE AND LITERATURE THAT THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN, HAVE SEEN FIT TO SANCTION AND PATRONIZE THE LIGHTEST AND MOST TRANSIENT FORMS OF FICTION. THE COMMON TENDENCY TO RESPECT THE BETTER AND LOOK TO THE HIGHER IN MOST DEPARTMENTS, HAS CAUSED US TO SEEK ONE GROUND FOR RETREAT. STEPPING FROM ONE EXTREME TO THE OTHER, WE SEEK REST IN THE ETHEREAL REALMS OF SENTIMENTALITY. RECEDING FROM CLOSEST FACT, WE DIVE INTO THE WIDEST SCOPE OF IMPROBABILITIES. TIRING OF EXACTNESS OF DICTION, WE LONG FOR VARIATION IN THE RACY LINES WHICH DEAL WITH THE ULTRA-NATURAL.

SO MUCH FOR THE CHARACTER OF OUR FICTION. BUT IT MAY BE ASKED WHY NOT TOLERATE THAT WHICH IS DESIRED? WHY CRITICISE WHAT MEETS WITH GENERAL APPROVAL? IF THE CHIEF END OF FICTION IS TO ENTERTAIN, WHY NOT LET THE ENTERTAINED HAVE THEIR CHOSEN RESORTS? THE SAME ARGUMENT WOULD PROVE EQUALLY EFFICIENT, IF URGED IN FAVOR OF ANY EVIL. PRESENT PLEASURE CANNOT BE PURSUED REGARDLESS OF COMING EFFECTS. HENCE OUR OPPOSITION TO THE PRESENT TYPE OF FICTION. FICTION MAY BE COMPARED TO STIMULATING FOODS. IF WE ARE CAREFUL TO SELECT THE RIGHT QUALITY AND TAKE IT AT PROPER TIMES AND IN PROPER QUANTITIES, IT BRINGS A FAVORABLE RESULT.

BUT IT MAY BE REGARDED AS NO LESS <sup>or</sup> INITIATING, WHEN DEVoured INDISCREETLY. WHEN THE DUTIES OF THE DAY ARE NEGLECTED AND THE REPOSE OF THE NIGHT IS SACRIFICED, IN ORDER TO FOLLOW ILL DEFINED CHARACTERS THROUGH ENTANGLED PLOTS AND IMPROBABLE SCENES, THEN HAS FICTION ELICITED AN ATTENTION WHICH WILL PROVE DETRIMENTAL AND INJURIOUS. READERS BECOME ENAMORED WITH A CLASS OF LITERATURE WHICH AFFORDS NO REWARD IN ITSELF, AND SHUTS OUT ALL LONGING FOR ANYTHING BETTER. THE APPETITE INCREASES WITH TIME AND IS GRATIFIED ONLY IN THE PERUSAL OF LIKE MATTER. PARENTS DOTE ON THEIR PRECOCIOUS CHILDREN, WHEN THEY FIND THEM BURIED WITH INTEREST IN WILD SENSATIONAL SCENES; BUT LAMENT THEIR INABILITY TO DIVERT THEIR ATTENTION TO THE MORE SUBSTANTIAL, WHEN MATURER YEARS ARRIVE. AT FIRST EXCITED AND PLEASED BY THE SENTIMENTAL, THE YOUTH IS LOATH TO TURN TO THE UNEVENTFUL AND INSTRUCTIVE IN LATER YEARS. WHO OF US HAS NOT SEEN MANY A BRIGHT READER DEVOTE ENOUGH TIME TO THIS LIGHT UNINSTRUCTIVE LITERATURE TO HAVE BECOME WELL INFORMED, HAD HIS ATTENTION BEEN PROPERLY DIRECTED? IF THE FICTION OF COLONIAL TIMES WAS OF THE SAME TYPE AS THAT OF OURS, WE CAN BUT SANCTION THE DECREE OF THE PURITAN, DECLARING IT AN OUT-CAST WITH THE THEATRE.

WE DO NOT WISH TO CONDEMN GOOD WORKS OF FICTION BECAUSE THEY HAPPEN TO BE WRITTEN IN OUR TIMES, BUT CANNOT COUNTENANCE THE TENDENCY TO EXCLUDE THE WORTHY AND ACCEPT THE UNWORTHY. WE WOULD NOT BE UNDERSTOOD TO AFFIRM THE NON-EXISTENCE OF LAUDABLE AUTHORS OF FICTION, BUT WOULD



RATHER MOURN THE PREDOMINANCE AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE LESS CREDITABLE SCHOOL. SCRIBBLERS AND SUPERFICIAL WRITERS ARE COMMON TO ALL TIMES, BUT WHEN THEY ARE SET UP AS THE LUMINARIES OF THE DAY, INSTEAD OF BEING CAST ASIDE AND PASSED UNNOTICED, THEIR POWER FOR GOOD OR EVIL MUST BE FELT. SAYS MACAULAY; 'IT IS IN LITERATURE THAT QUACKERY IS MOST EASILY PUFFED, AND EXCELLENCE MOST EASILY DECRIED.' THIS TENDENCY OF OUR FICTION TO DECLINE CAN ONLY BE OVERCOME BY A CESSATION OF THE DEMAND FOR SUCH A CLASS OF WORKS. WHEN THE SUPPLY OF INFERIOR WRITERS IS REDUCED BY POPULAR DECREE; WHEN THE SUPERIOR TALENT AMONG FICTION WRITERS SHALL BE DIRECTED IN IMITATION OF CONCEDED MASTERS, INSTEAD OF CATERING TO THE CAPRICE OF READERS, AND SCOTT BECOMES TO THE NOVEL WHAT SHAKESPEARE IS TO THE DRAMA; WHEN IMPROVEMENT IN TYPE, AND NOT INCREASE IN AMOUNT, SHALL BE THE CHIEF END; THEN WILL THE INFERIOR MANY BE CAST ASIDE, WHILE THE SUPERIOR FEW REMAIN, AND FICTION BECOME WHAT IT SHOULD BE;--'PRIME NATURE WITH ADDED ARTISTRY.'